

myriad leaves

SEPTEMBER 2007



Cosmos in Bloom in Okayama Prefecture

万葉

Myriad Leaves is the English-language title for the earliest collection of Japanese poetry. It contains 4,516 waka poems, the last of which is dated AD759. There is uncertainty over the intention of the title: it could mean either 'Collection of ten thousand leaves' or 'Collection for ten thousand generations'.

Farewell and Greeting from the Incoming and Outgoing Directors of JLGC	2
News and JLGC News	3
Okayama Prefecture	4
Feature: Japan Leads the Way in Recycling	6
Work Placement Report	7
Editorial: Disaster Prevention in Japan	8

The Council of Local Authorities
for International Relations
Founded in 1988, CLAIR is a joint
organisation representing Japan's
47 prefectures, 17 designated cities
and 1,817 municipalities.



A Greeting from Director Mutai



Dear All,

My name is Shunsuke Mutai and I have been appointed to replace Mr. Naiki as Director of JLGC, London.

Before I came to London at the end of July this year, I worked in many different areas at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, including the reform of local taxation and fiscal systems related to decentralization, as well as on issues of crisis management and community policy. Immediately before coming to the UK, I worked as chief co-ordinator for the Ministry in liaising with the Diet (Japan's Parliament).

This is my first posting abroad, and I am very excited to have this opportunity to widen my knowledge about the UK and other parts of Europe. Personally, I am interested in how the European Union is positioning itself in this age of globalisation, and in particular how each region maintains and promotes its individual identity while at the same time pursuing regional development. Also, I am looking forward to doing some fieldwork in this area as I am always happy to witness things for myself.

Within Japan, I enjoy an extensive range of contacts and have relationships within many different networks, so if you have any questions about public policy in Japan, please don't hesitate to contact me at the office and I will do my best to get them answered.

There is a phrase in Japanese taken from the teachings of Zen: 'Ichigoichie' which translates as 'treasure every meeting, for it will never recur'. I am looking forward to starting work with you in Europe, and I intend to treasure every moment.

Shunsuke Mutai,
Director

Select Career History:

1980	Graduated from Tokyo University and entered the Ministry of Home Affairs
	Posted to Hiroshima Prefecture
	Posted to Gunma Prefecture
1992	Various postings within the Ministry, most notably the Local Finance Co-ordination Division and the Local Tax Planning Division
1998	Head of General Affairs in Ibaraki Prefecture
2000	Counsellor, Secretariat of the Prime Minister's Committee for the Promotion of Decentralisation
2001	Director of the Disaster Management Division, Fire and Disaster Management Agency
2004	Director of the Local Public Finance Co-ordination Division

The Director signing the contract with Mr. Clarke at Birmingham University

A Farewell from Director Naiki

Dear British Friends and Colleagues,

I would like to thank you all very much for your support, kindness and friendship you have shown for our organisation and myself over the past three years.

My assignment in London as First Secretary at the Embassy of Japan led me to be involved in the creation of the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations (CLAIR) twenty years ago, and to spend these past years as Director at JLGC.

My first major event was the 2004 Japan Day Seminar held in London. This was particularly special because it was also the 15th anniversary of JLGC in London. The theme of the 2005 Japan Day Seminar held in Belfast was 'Global Cities, regional government and decentralisation: Lessons from the UK and Japan.' We were lucky enough to have some excellent speakers which really made the event. The 2006 Japan Day Seminar was held in Edinburgh under the theme of 'Decentralisation, Devolution and Delivery - Local Government in the 21st Century'.

In July of 2004, JLGC organised a stand at the Local Government Association Exhibition and Conference. The rationale was to promote the existence and purpose of JLGC and CLAIR to local government organisations in the UK. This practice has since become an annual event, and indeed this year, JLGC was proud to have a stand at the exhibition held in Birmingham.

I have also tried to build a strong partnership with the University of Birmingham in our Long Term and Short Term Training Programmes. The Long Term Training Programme is now celebrating its 10th anniversary. JLGC is profoundly grateful to the University and its School of Public Policy for all it has done for the many students from Japanese local governments they have taught, and for the many we hope they will have in the future.

The Japan Study Tour has been run three times and all have been equally as successful. This year's theme is that of local food promotion and production and I'm sure the participant will find it as interesting and beneficial as previous participants.

As Japan is in the process of reforming the local government system (including devolution, decentralisation and mergers) we have had the opportunity to exchange opinions and views about the development of local autonomy which has been very useful. Japan is already tackling the problems which the UK will face in the near future - those of the aging population, waste management and climate change. We feel it is important to consult other agencies and learn about different approaches in order to find the best solution.

I sincerely hope that both you and your respective agencies will stay in good health and be prosperous.

I am looking forward to meeting with you in Japan, should you ever have the opportunity to come.

Shigeru Naiki
Director, 2004-2007



Diagnosing Home Crime Prevention: (Chiba Prefecture)

Employees from the Tsuchiura City Safe Living Section have started making house calls in an effort to reduce crime by giving prevention advice. Officers on loan from the City's Police Department have been going to homes and talking to people about locking doors and pointing out other information regarding how to keep homes safe from intruders. This service, which started in May, has visited approximately 60 households already. Home owners have commented on how useful it has been. In conjunction with the visits and in order to raise awareness of crime, the department also sends out a monthly newsletter to all homes in the area.

Cutting Down on Plastic Bags in Supermarkets: (Ishikawa Prefecture)



The sign displayed at participating supermarkets showing the branch is operating the new scheme.

A new sign has been designed to alert the customer that the supermarket they are shopping in is environmentally aware. The prefecture aims to slash plastic bag usage by 20%, and boost the number of people using the new 'My Bag' scheme by more than 30%. The proposal, started on 27th June has already attracted the co-operation of 12 supermarket branches. Here, customers will receive points for bringing their own bags and will also receive money off vouchers and the loan of a 'My Bag' for use in the supermarket. A list of the number of people with the 'My Bag' will be kept so that the supermarkets can report annually to the Prefecture. This will ensure that so rates of plastic bag consumption and reduction are maintained.

Promoting Food Education: (Miyagi Prefecture)

The Health Promotion Department has put together a squad to try and improve overall food education in the area. The aims are threefold: to introduce local produce, to teach the traditional food culture of the local area, and to give people the opportunity to harvest and produce food. This programme is predominantly aimed at children with the purpose of teaching them how to cook and eat healthily. The programme intends to concretely improve awareness of local produce with the support of the Food Education Co-ordinator and volunteers.



A volunteer helping the children to make food using seasonal produce.

June:

JLGC SIGNS NEW CONTRACT WITH INLOGOV

On June 18th, JLGC and the University of Birmingham signed a new contract with INLOGOV in which they will prepare a review and analysis of developments in the UK local government and local governance. The reports will be set in the context of the elections to the devolved Governments in Scotland and Wales and local elections in May 2007, and the publication of the Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration Review, the Comprehensive Spending Review, as well as the reports from the Councillors Commission and the LGA Commission on Climate Change due in Autumn of this year.

MJ AWARDS

On the 28th, Director Naiki was invited to attend the MJ's annual Local Government Achievement Awards at the London Hilton by Mike Burton, Editor of the MJ. The evening was very eventful and enjoyed by all.

July:

LGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

Between July 3-5th, JLGC representatives attended the conference held at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham, and had a stand at the exhibition for the third time. There was much interest in the Japan Study Tour this year from delegates and exhibitors alike, and we succeeded in alerting many more local authorities and other relevant agencies to our organisation.

JET PRE-DEPARTURE EVENT

On the 13th, the annual JET Pre-Departure Reception was held at the Embassy of Japan in London. Here the new JETs (Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme) about to depart on their adventures in Japan were able to talk to former participants about their experiences on the programme. JLGC was represented at the event and we had the opportunity to hear the views of past and present participants alike.

This year 206 new Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) and 8 Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) from the UK are due to go out to Japan, and we wish them well.

Although the aim of the programme is to promote language teaching in schools, this is generally taken to mean the English Language as the numbers of participants from countries with English as their mother language attest. As the scheme is promoted in more and more countries, the number of participants from more traditional countries drops accordingly.

The Total Number of JETs from Selected Participant Countries Over 3 Years:

Year	UK	US	Australia	Ireland	France	Germany	Jamaica
2007	577	2808	316	95	19	20	41
2006	717	2879	387	114	19	27	40
2005	916	2873	420	121	20	31	48

Source: CLAIR, 2007

For more information about the JET Programme, please visit: www.jet-uk.org/

TRIP TO WALES

At the end of July, the Director and Government Relations Manager made a trip to meet Byron Davies, Chief Executive of Cardiff City Council and Steve Thomas, Chief Executive of the WLGA, Gary Davies of the Welsh Assembly Government's International Division and John Palmer of the Local Government Policy Division. The purpose was to discuss this coming Japan Day Seminar scheduled to be held early in 2008. After holding the event in London, Belfast and Edinburgh, JLGC would like to bring the event to Wales next, taking into account the many academic and industrial links with Japan and continue the theme of devolution.

The Director was also a guest of Ian Miller, Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council at the Llangollen International Music Eisteddfod where he met with the Chief Executive Mr. Williams to discuss inviting more Japanese artists to the festival.

August:

NEW DIRECTOR STARTS AT JLGC

Mr. Mutai comes to JLGC from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in Tokyo. He has had a career in several local government areas thus far, although this is his first posting abroad. We sincerely hope his tenure here at JLGC will be a success and that he will be able to continue the work done so far.

Okayama Prefecture

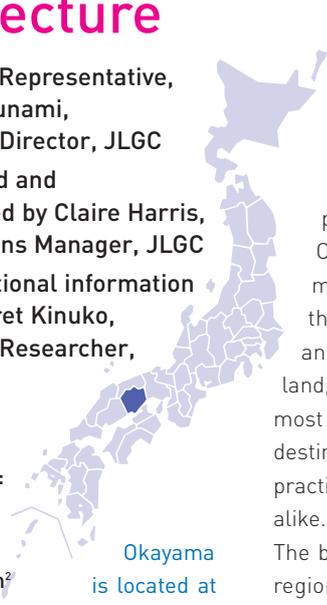
Okayama Representative,
Kazuko Sunami,
Assistant Director, JLGC

Translated and
researched by Claire Harris,
Publications Manager, JLGC

With additional information
by Margaret Kinuko,
Assistant Researcher,
JLGC

Population:
1,950,000

Area:
7,112.73km²



Okayama
is located at
the heart of

western Japan and has served
as the hub for regional
transportation and commerce for
centuries. From ancient times to the
present, Okayama has contributed
cultural, economic and agricultural
prosperity to the country. Today, with
the motorway network extending the
length and breadth of the prefecture,
all Shinkansen bullet trains making
stops at the JR Okayama Station and
both domestic and international flights
departing from the Airport, Okayama

Prefecture has an
enrichment of transport
infrastructure in
Japan and it
continues to develop
as a key transportation
location.

The development of fast
paced industry aside,
Okayama Prefecture has
maintained and nurtured
the geographical, cultural
and natural beauty of its
land, leading it to be one of the
most inspirational and popular
destinations in Japan for both
practicing artists and art-lovers
alike.

The breath taking mountainous
region to the north contains
wonderful hot springs, caves and
waterfalls, to lose your thoughts in,
whilst the southern part with its calm
sea mottled with the most picturesque
of tiny islands, is the prefect escape
from the hustle and bustle of everyday
city life.

The favourable all year round warm
climate even with the light monsoon
season just before summer ensures
that there is never one particular peak
tourist season. This is not only good for
local business, but which should, if you
happen to find yourself fortunate



enough to visit Okayama, ensure that
you can take your time to appreciate the
many sight-seeing attractions at your
own pace without the prospect of the
overzealous tour group.

Most highly recommended of the
tourist destinations is the Korakuen
Garden, one of the 3 great gardens of
Japan. Built by the local feudal lord in
the Edo Period and having taken an
incredible 14 years to complete, it is a
testimony to the perfection of the
Japanese garden and the traditional
Japanese aesthetic, so admired in the
west.



4
prefecture

1

2

On the other hand for a taste of modern Japan, the Seto Ohashi Bridge demonstrates a feat of amazing engineering abilities. The 2 tier bridge carries not only highway traffic on the top tier but rail traffic on the bottom. Spanning an astonishing 9.4km and joining Okayama Prefecture with Kagawa Prefecture it is another fine example of Okayama City's fostering of a belief in creating a visual harmony and balance between nature and technology. The industrial steel of the bridge is countered at night with many lights that reflect and glimmer upon the water like pearls.

Festivals are aplenty in Japan, and Okayama is no exception with a scattering of festivals from February through to December each year. In February Okayama City is host to a legendary and highly unusual 500 year

(remembering that there are 3,000 fit able bodied men) over 2 pieces of exceptionally lucky sacred wands.

Bikan Chiku

Kurashiki is the second largest city in Okayama and has been an important maritime centre since ancient times. During the feudal period, river traffic in Bikan Chiku was of vital importance to the area and Shikoku across the Inland Sea, great storehouses were built and it is from this the city derives its name. The Edo Period Lords also built great mansions encompassing storehouses which lead the distinctive buildings that are preserved for the sight-seer today. Modernisation brought industry to the area and the Ohara family founded textile mills which in turn increased the area's wealth and significance. The Ohara Museum of Art started life

Arts and Culture

Okayama is renowned for its Bizen Ware, a traditional form of pottery which dates back at least 800 years. The pieces differ from conventional pottery in that they are not protected by a glaze, but instead fired intensively for periods of days at a time. As with many traditional Japanese arts, harmony between the earth, heaven and man is sought through in this case, the colouring of the pieces. The unusual shades seek to achieve equilibrium between the earth of the clay itself and the fire which causes the colour to set, thus balancing the materials with the process of making the object in a way commonly associated with the native Shinto religion.

Okayama also has a place in traditional washi (paper) production, Igusa rush



old 'Saidaiji Eyo' (Hadaka Matusri) or to put it simpler, The Naked Festival, famed for enticing 3,000 men clad only in loin cloths to run an eye watering gauntlet of endurance. Firstly they must purify themselves in the bitterly cold water of the Yoshii River, before sprinting around the temple grounds with yet more water thrown and finally to commence battle with each other

as a private collection in 1930. It was initially built as a tribute to Kojima Torajiro, a Japanese artist who painted in the western style but it was the first museum in Japan to exhibit works by western artists. Now its works have been expanded to include Monet and Matisse amongst other well recognised artists.

products and sword making. Its diverse landscape stretching from mountains to agricultural plateau and sea has meant the region has made a name for itself promoting fruit and fish. Japan still enjoys a largely seasonal variety of food, and the temperate climate ensures that there is always a local specialty to be tasted.



Japan Leads the Way in Recycling



The plastic recycling mark

Recycling has a reasonably long tradition in Japan. It hasn't generally come about as a result of environmental concern but rather it is to do with thrift. Japan is a country which has few natural resources and thus several laws were passed under the 1999 plan to create a Recycling Oriented Economic System which is intended to promulgate the three R's: Reduce, Recycle, Reuse.

Japan recycles the plastic, glass, iron, copper and aluminium from fridges, air conditioners, televisions and washing machines; cars, computers, paper, aluminium cans, all plastic, as well as normal everyday waste. Most recovered minerals and plastics are re-used in the manufacturing process and very little then goes on to landfill.

This comprehensive recycling plan is dependent on a number of different components, but most importantly, the responsibility for these larger household items falls to the manufacturer to organise and recycle its own products. Local authorities are responsible for collecting burnable rubbish, plastics, paper, glass, cans and other such everyday goods including light bulbs, batteries and crockery, which is stored and sold on to recycling firms, however the responsibility for the separation of these items is that of the consumer.

Local Authorities:

All local authorities run their collection schemes a little bit differently, but a good example of the householder's responsibility can be taken from Ichikawa City in Chiba Prefecture. There is an English language publication given to foreigners when they register at the city office with all kinds of information. More importantly it contains detailed instructions about how to separate the rubbish. The collection days differ according to the area, although all rubbish is put in a communal collection point where the right day for each collection is written leaving no room for ambiguity. In Ichikawa, the community must separate their

rubbish into 12 categories: plastic containers and packaging, bottles, cans, newspapers, magazines, cardboard, paper packaging, cloth, burnable (foodstuffs), non-burnable (crockery, etc), toxic rubbish (batteries), and bulk rubbish (old furniture, etc). Burnable garbage is collected three times a week and general recyclables once a week with bulk rubbish being collected fortnightly. In the case of some bulk rubbish, permission from the local office must be obtained, a small amount paid and a special order written before it can be taken.

Some schools and supermarkets offer incentives to recycle: milk and juices come in waxed paper cartons which are then washed and flattened by the consumer and taken to a drop off point at the school or supermarket. The institution can then sell these on to a recycling company and buy recycled toilet paper from them. This is then distributed to those customers who have recycled their cartons. It can be considered a gesture of good will. Many supermarkets now do not give out plastic bags, but they can be purchased.

A comprehensive system has had to have been designed and developed to teach the consumer how to separate their waste. Plastic marked *pura* indicates it can be recycled in the plastic waste, and recyclable paper is also marked. An example of multiple markings would be a lunch box bought from a convenience store. It would bear the *pura* mark, any paper the *kami* (paper) mark. The consumer would be expected to dispose of each part appropriately. In practical terms for the householder, this means several different rubbish bags (each with the expected contents detailed on the front) open in the home at the same time. However, since it is also the responsibility of the consumer to wash and flatten all recycling, smell over a week is not a problem. At train stations the bins are all separated into space for cans, plastic bottles, newspapers and burnable waste leaving the commuter in no doubt which bin to throw their waste into.

The one problem Japan does have in its method of waste collection is crows. Whereas in the UK, we tend to consider rats and foxes a problem when thinking about rubbish, in Japan the communal waste collection points, the see through nature of the rubbish bags (so there is no question of what is in each bag) and several collections a week mean the crows are well fed and very large. Generally people stop the crows going through the rubbish by putting it out only on the day it is due to be collected, and covering the bags with a net. Research is being done in this area, and it has been found that a clear yellow plastic rubbish bag does not allow the crows to see inside, meaning they then do not dissect them in search of food.

Household Items:

With fridges, computers, air conditioners, washing machines and cars made after 2000, a more complicated arrangement is required. In 2000, the Basic Environmental Law was ratified over 2 years with several components including: the Waste Management and Cleansing Law (with responsibilities for discharging companies); the Law of Promotion of Effective Utilisation of Resources (reduction of waste generation); the Law for Recycling of Specified Kinds of Home Appliances (HARL); the Law for Promotion of Sorted Collection and Recycling of Containers and Packaging; and the Green Purchasing Law. With reference to HARL, upon purchasing a product from the retailer, a copy of the manifest is given to the consumer. When the time comes to replace the item, the consumer calls the company who will then arrange



A sheet given to householders to instruct them on how to separate their rubbish. The spaces are so collection days can be written in.



for the item to be collected and transported to a factory where the component parts are broken down for recycling and reuse. A small sum is paid by the consumer, however this is set at a national level and currently stands at £20 for a fridge, £14 for an air conditioner, £11 for a TV and £9 for a washing machine.

Problems to Overcome:

Although this system works very well in the main, there are however several problems which are being addressed:

1. Uncertain responsibility: Local authorities role share several areas of responsibility and must therefore liaise with their partners. Also, it is important to make sure the consumer can easily access information to know what they should do.
2. Who is covered by the laws: do small and medium sized firms also qualify?
3. Recycling technique: is it environmentally friendly and effective?
4. International trade: when does it become cheaper to ship bottles to China for recycling rather than do it in Japan, and does this then not create more environmental problems?
5. Extended producer responsibility: that the manufacturer has as responsibility after the goods have been sold and when they reach the end of their working lives.
6. Goods which were manufactured before the laws were established are not eligible for recycling under the current structure. New products are recycled effectively, but disposal of older products creates a problem because they don't fit into the system.

Japan's comprehensive method of dealing with recyclable waste has meant that fly tipping has been reduced, although not altogether eradicated, due in part to the consumer having to contribute a nominal sum to the recycling process.

Japan also has long had an effective method for dealing with its landfill material. Tokyo Bay is largely made from 'reclaimed' land, areas which were once land fill sites are now shopping complexes with up-market apartments, one way at least to solve the shortage of space in the dense metropolis.

It would appear then that the UK has much to learn from Japan creating an economy and system where recycling can work effectively. A fortnightly collection of rubbish as has been proposed in some areas does not appear to be the most effective way of tackling the 3Rs. A more comprehensive effort on the part of the government to force manufactures and businesses to take responsibility for their waste in conjunction with educating the general public would be necessary to improve our recycling rates and really have an impact on the environment.

Work Placement

By Takeya Sato, Assistant Director, Japan Local Government Centre

Assistant Directors, Yuka Kuwabara, Toshihiko Takeda and Takeya Sato went on a one week visit to Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council. Mr. Sato's report follows:

From the 21st to 25th May we had the chance to visit Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council. It was the first time for us to visit a local authority outside London since we arrived in April. The entire tour was full of surprise and discovery.

We were fortunate enough to be invited to stay at the homes of officers from Newcastle-Under-Lyme Borough Council. Each of us found our host families to be friendly and welcoming. In the evenings we walked along the canal, talked about the differences in our cultures and learnt about local history - all in all spending some valuable and instructive time with them. However, the thing that surprised us the most was that each of the houses had a fireplace!

In the town centre, we were particularly impressed with the history of the Guildhall. The busy square still houses a market, but close by is a new cinema complex which we thought was an excellent example of successful regeneration; and we were also impressed by the balance between the beauty of the older historical buildings and the modern requirements. The town is surrounded by spectacular countryside and has a quiet atmosphere. When compared to Japan, the residential areas in Newcastle have more greenery and I particularly enjoyed listening to the bird song each morning.

This town has long history and there remains a medieval atmosphere. We could see that the local government has worked hard to achieve good regeneration in the town, and were still in the process of taking further steps towards re-development. The local government structure and the communities are slightly different from that in Japan; we were surprised that the voluntary sector was working so efficiently and had such good relations with the local authority. Also we noticed a significant amount of cultural difference between our two countries.

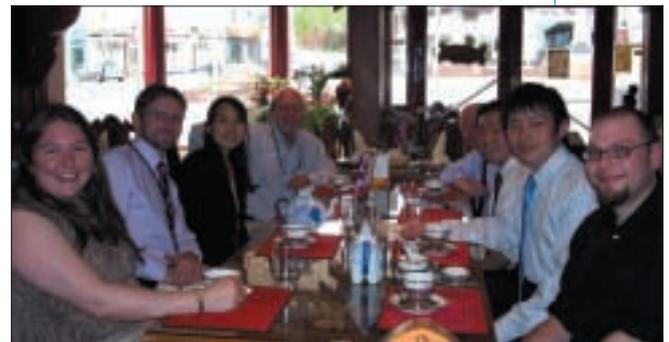
The one thing particularly memorable was the beauty of the parks in Newcastle-Under-Lyme. Each of them made the town cozy and attractive; particularly at Bradwell Crematorium, we could really understand the thought and planning that had gone into the layout of the area. During this visit, we were able to see how local government in Britain works. We realised the people living in Newcastle-Under-Lyme love their town and are very proud of it.

During our stay, we toured many establishments and were able to sit in on some important meetings which we found incredibly useful in the process of our research. In particular, the week we were there, the Annual Council and other ceremonies were held, so it was a good opportunity for us to see the moment of induction for the new Town Mayor.

We were also able to make a brief visit to the Peak District and see a Shakespeare play so we felt we really experienced the English countryside and culture whilst we were there.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the staff at the Borough Council and the people of Newcastle-Under-Lyme for making us so welcome, and inviting us into their homes and offices.

On the left:
Kerry Clarke,
Mark Barrow,
Chief Executive of
Newcastle-Under-
Lyme District Council,
Yuka Kuwabara, and
Ian Jenkinson;
on the right:
Joseph Clarke,
Toshihiko Takeda,
Takeya Sato and **Jeff**
Hamnett



Editorial Disaster Prevention in Japan

Japan probably has the most comprehensive system of disaster prevention in the world. When bōsai [disaster prevention] is mentioned, the Japanese will often reply: 'Be prepared and have no regrets'.

At 11.58am on September 1st, 1923 an earthquake struck the Kanto region. With a magnitude of about 8 on the Richter Scale it lasted for up to 10 minutes, devastating many of the main cities of Tokyo, Chiba, Kanagawa and Shizuoka Prefectures and killing almost 140,000 people. Exacerbating the devastation was a nearby typhoon - the high winds quickly spread fires. Landslides swept away 800 people, and tsunamis of up to 10 metres high engulfed neighbouring islands. To this end, September 1st has become Disaster Prevention Day, and many schools and other public offices hold emergency drills to raise awareness of potential dangers and how to minimise them. Nationally, extensive emergency drills are also carried out with the help of volunteers, the fire, police, and ambulance authorities and Self Defence Force staff.

More recently in the early morning of January 17th, 1995 an earthquake of magnitude 7 hit the area of Kobe in Western Japan. In spite of Japan's awareness of the fault lines running across the country and their extensive training and preparation schemes, over 6000 people were killed in the urban area, 5000 of those crushed and trapped by collapsing buildings. Improvements in construction meant that many of the larger buildings remained intact, the rail network was not completely devastated, and the road system was fully operational only a month after the disaster. It is worth noting that although the larger buildings survived with little structural damage, because the time at which the earthquake struck, most people were at home and it was in the collapse of the residential housing where most of the fatalities occurred.

Citizens are made aware of emergency measures from an early age. Each area has designated evacuation sites; advice is made available in many different languages instructing householders to carry out regular maintenance on their property and fix furniture to the walls. Each home should have an emergency survival kit consisting of enough tinned food and bottled water to last at least 3 days, a battery operated short-wave radio, and a torch. At home, most gas cookers are fitted with a valve so they can be turned off when not in use, thus minimising the risk of fire. Local government endorses rules to live by in the event of an earthquake. These include working together in fire prevention and safely tackling a fire, staying calm and joining in emergency relief work. Typhoons are also a problem in Japan and an annual occurrence. Much of urban Japan is built on reclaimed and low-lying land, so making people aware of where their house lies and what to do in the event of flooding has been a priority for local authorities.

Most interestingly when reading the advice for typhoons, the Japanese Government advises personal responsibility, warning people in low-lying areas to prepare appropriately. In the UK, this consciousness seems to have been abdicated, and therefore the onus for providing drinking water and sandbags etc., falls to the local authority. However, in Britain we do not have a history of preparing for emergencies, and although the Met Office is able to give us advice about heavy rain and flood warnings, we don't have the same idea of personal responsibility to make sure we are prepared in the event of a natural disaster. The Basic Law on Natural Disasters (Japan) stipulates that local authorities are responsible for preparedness, and therefore each authority

has a division designated to this task. These divisions make evacuation plans and publish hazard maps for each area detailing natural obstacles as well as man-made ones. In the event of a natural disaster, they co-ordinate the relief effort and also maintain the public signs which give directions to the nearest evacuation centre. Another point worthy of mentioning is that most new high-rise buildings in Japan now have a designated evacuation point which takes the form of a red triangle on one of the windows. If workers must evacuate, it is to this point the fire crew will go.

Centrally, it is the Cabinet Office together with the Fire and Disaster Management Agency who have overall responsibility for disaster prevention, although each ministry will co-operate to synchronize an evacuation and clean-up operation. Disaster prevention is a major part of the budget and many billions of Yen are set aside each year to ensure that when the worst happens, everyone is prepared. This infrastructure in local and central government appears to be unique among developed nations even when compared with those countries which are also regularly subject to devastating natural events.

The common threat of nature shared by the Japanese means that now some 900,000 people belong to a voluntary group in their community to prepare to minimise the effects of a natural or man-made disaster. Japan has a long history of community involvement in the prevention of for example, fire. The development into organisations began during the Edo period where wooden houses were built very close together, and cooking occurred over an open hearth meaning the risk of fire spreading quickly to other dwellings was great. Now, cooking takes place over gas ranges so the original bodies have developed to include promoting disaster prevention and supplementing the information about disaster management provided by the government. These organisations work with the community to train them as bōsaisi [disaster prevention co-ordinators]. The fundamental aim of 'self-help and helping each other' coaches these bōsaisi in the established evacuation drills and additionally in facilitating group evacuation and rescue. So far, 18,000 people have taken the course and gained the qualification.

Japan is a collection of islands which suffer regularly from natural disasters and, as is typically Japanese, they have managed to organise themselves to be prepared for the event. All countries are subject to a few natural disasters even if they are on an irregular basis, from wild fires in Europe to the more destructive Category 5 hurricanes of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. Cast your mind back to the news images of New Orleans transmitted across the globe in August 2005. Rioting, looting, rape, and murder occurred in the days after the floods which devastated the city. Up to date infrastructure and personal accountability are the things Japan seems to have perfected in its disaster prevention policies. A leaf from their book might have saved a few lives and billions of dollars. The main difference in the way Japan organises its emergency plans is to encourage volunteers to aid the rescue services and trains them as necessary. Appropriate use of the thousands of people evacuated at that time in New Orleans might have given structure rather than derogating into crime. Crime is of course unstoppable, but total renunciation of accountability to merely wait for the emergency services is just as destructive.

We needn't think that disaster prevention is only for countries which have a more direct risk. Proper information combined with a sense of personal responsibility might have been worthwhile in countering the damage flooding caused this summer. It takes only a little stretching of the imagination to extrapolate from one extreme situation to another. If people are prepared for a natural disaster, then the same principles surely

apply to what to do in the event of a man-made one. With terrorism a seemingly more imminent threat than a major earthquake hitting the UK, a well prepared nation with a developed sense of personal accountability can only be beneficial to the nation as a whole.

More Information for Japan:

Cabinet Office, Government of Japan

<http://www.bousai.go.jp/>

Japan Society for Disaster Information Studies

<http://www.jasdis.gr.jp/index.html>

Japan Bōsaisi Organization <http://www.bousaisi.jp/>

Fire and Disaster Management Agency

<http://www.fdma.go.jp/en/>



The aftermath of the July earthquake in Niigata.

Photo by Mitsutoshi Yoshimine Soil Mechanics Laboratory, TMU

The Japan Local Government Centre is the UK office of CLAIR – the Council of Local Authorities for International Relations. Founded in 1988 with the support of Japan's Ministry of Home Affairs, now the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, CLAIR is a joint organisation of local authorities, working to promote and provide support for local internationalisation.

With its head office in Tokyo, CLAIR has branch offices in each of Japan's 47 prefectures and 17 designated cities, and also has 7 overseas offices – in Beijing, New York, Paris, Singapore, Seoul, Sydney and London. Each overseas office is responsible for a specific area; the London office covers the United Kingdom, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

The main functions of the JLGC in London are to conduct research on local government in the UK and northern Europe, and to promote exchanges between individuals, including government officers and local government representatives, in the UK and Japan. We are also involved in implementing the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) programme, which employs UK graduates in the fields of international exchange and English language education in Japan.



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A flood hazard map. The red areas indicate the likelihood of flooding, and the turquoise arrows show the route to get to the evacuation shelter.